

**Press Release****The Best of Vanessa-Mae**

- first-ever review of Vanessa-Mae's classical and pop careers, 1995-2002
  - highlights from six albums on one disc, including her latest single
    - plus brand new track, Art of War, by Vanessa-Mae and Youth
- enhanced video element on Art of War, as bonus track at end of album

CDC 5 57329 2 [1 CD]

When Vanessa-Mae was just eight, she swapped the comforts of her Chelsea school for the rigours of violin training in China. Though thousands of miles from home – cut off from friends, speaking no Chinese, living among students and teachers who spoke no English – Vanessa's six months in Beijing transformed her life for ever.

Under the strict eye of Professor Lin Yao-Ji, teacher of the Yankelevich Technique at the city's Central Conservatoire, Vanessa-Mae turned from prodigious talent into gifted player. The method demands a solid yet relaxed technique, allowing energy to be directed into the music rather than bottled up in physical tension. It's a style that's shaped Vanessa's life from that moment on – both in her playing and her musical tastes.

From that young girl to today's 23-year-old woman, Vanessa's musical journey has led from strictly classical through crossover to purely pop. Her new Best of album features 16 tracks which chart that progression, from the ground-breaking and much-imitated 1995 disc, *The Violin Player* to her recent chart album, *Subject to Change*. The six featured discs have sold some seven million copies, and earned her over 40 international platinum and 18 gold awards, so far.

The album also premieres a brand new track from Vanessa, working in collaboration with Killing Joke bass player and dance mix-master, Youth, who produced *Subject to Change*. *Art of War* is an edgy play on Sergey Prokofiev's famous Montagues and Capulets marching theme from his ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*, overlaid with Vanessa's intricate bow- and finger-work and Youth's trademark pulsing synth sound. It is also presented in an enhanced video form on the disc, as a bonus 17th track.

"I am proud that following my own instincts about music and the violin was right," says Vanessa. "The violin in the right hands is not an out-of-date instrument only for performing museum music. The violin is versatile if the violinist is versatile."

Long before today's public became used to seeing classical musicians performing rock and pop favourites – or classical-crossover – the teenage Vanessa threw open the door for this new fusion style of music with her distinctive and virtuosic playing. No performer had achieved such simultaneous impact on both classical and pop charts as Vanessa made in 1995 and 1996 with her two albums, *The Violin Player* and *The Classical Album 1*. While the first sold 3.2m copies, the second became the fastest-selling classical recording, with 500,000 albums sold within two weeks of release – massive pop results for a core classical disc of unadorned Bach and Bruch.

She became the first (and remains the only) instrumentalist to be nominated for Best Female Artist at the BRIT Awards, took the World Music Award for Best-Selling Classical Recording Artist and won the HMV Silver Clef Award for Top International Artist. She has played in over 60 countries – from the Kremlin to Times Square, Melbourne Grand Prix to London's Mardi Gras – and on one memorable night, 30 June 1997,

was the only foreign artist to perform at the re-unification ceremony of Hong Kong to China. And all, incredibly, before her 18th birthday.

### **'Teeny Paganini'**

Her fusion style and success outraged die-hard traditionalists in the classical world but they couldn't argue with her playing abilities. Described, at 10, by the director of the Royal College of Music as "like Mozart and Mendelssohn before her, a true prodigy", her violin teacher, Professor Felix Andrievsky, revealed "I was jealous to see how easily she plays the most difficult things – she looks as though she was born with the violin". Her friend and mentor Vasko Vassilev, concert master of the Royal Opera House Orchestra, believes "you have to go back to Jascha Heifetz, Yehudi Menuhin and Fritz Kreisler to find a young violinist with her spirituality."

Born in Singapore on 27 October 1978 – Paganini's birthday, 196 years before – piano was Vanessa's first love, which she started playing at three before moving to London with her mother Pamela, a talented pianist. Encouraged in music by her new British stepfather, Graham Nicholson, Vanessa took up the violin at five and was, by eight, a child prodigy, sent to Beijing for intensive study. Her training and dedication to the instrument was rewarded with a debut with the Philharmonia at just 10, and entry to the Royal College of Music in London at 11. By 13, she had recorded three classical albums, including the Tchaikovsky and Beethoven violin concertos – available on The Classical Collection (CMS 567456 2, 3CDs) – and toured the Far East as soloist with the London Mozart Players. At 14, she recorded her first pop-fusion album, *The Violin Player*, with classical arrangements and original music by Mike Batt, which shifted her career from classical prodigy to crossover pioneer.

### **life outside music**

The huge success of her albums and concert tours has introduced Vanessa-Mae to a wider global audience, beyond music. Describing her as 'Paganini in hot pants', *People* magazine named her one of the 50 Most Beautiful People in the world in 1996. Her love of fashion has taken her to many new places, even making a sensational catwalk debut in Paris fashion week for Jean-Paul Gaultier, when she gave an impromptu performance on her violin while modelling the show's centrepiece, the wedding dress. And a passion for film, which first teamed her with Disney for the soundtrack to its fantasy animation, *Mulan*, brought her first starring role in 1999, as Princess Jasmine in an ABC production of *The Arabian Nights*. But the biggest buzz for Vanessa, beyond music, is skiing. A passion she has held since the age of five, she was even invited to join the Thai ski team to enter the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

### **the future**

Today, after a roller-coaster ride to 23 – and a professional musician for 13 of those years – Vanessa is an independent woman, carving out a new career with her own music, and happy to have moved on from the child prodigy. "Many things about me have changed," she admits, "but something that will always remain is my determination to play music that satisfies me, and never to be restricted by categories imposed arbitrarily from outside. I have continued to play, and will always love, classical music – it is my heritage. But I will always want to experiment, to discover new musical experiences. This is just the beginning, I can promise you!"

### **the albums**

*The Violin Player* (1995), described by Vanessa as 'techno-acoustic fusion', brought us her first single – the show-stopping *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*.

*The Classical Album 1* (1996) ranged from Bach to Bruch, Beethoven and Brahms, plus her arrangement of *I'm A-Doun*, a traditional Scots air which inspired Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy*.

*Storm* (1997), the second pop-fusion album, featured a mix of contemporary classical arrangements and instrumental fusion originals, including the title track, a turbocharged revision of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* – later played by her as the opener to the inaugural Classical BRIT Awards in 2000 – and *Bach Street Prelude*, based on Bach's *Partita No.3 in E*.

*China Girl: The Classical Album 2* (1998) took Vanessa back to her spiritual home, with her overture for Hong Kong's re-unification, *Happy Valley*, and a homage to *Turandot*.

*Original 4 Seasons & Devil's Trill* (1998) injected fresh energy into the signature piece for all classical violinists, with new arrangements backed by a hand-picked orchestra of soloists.

*Subject to Change* (2001) showed a new direction as an artist and writer, and launched the chilled out and pure pop sound of Vanessa-Mae, including the single *White Bird*, produced by dance-meister, Youth.

[© 1996 - 2002 EMI Classics. All Rights Reserved](#)